

GOING PLACES:

- Literacy throughout your classroom
- The science of it all
- Get Going! Transition Tips

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We're Going Places!

This month, in the first of our topic focused newsletters, we're presenting ideas, suggestions, and plans for creating a "Going Places" topic of study in your classroom. In this edition you'll find specific science, literacy, transition, and family involvement activities. Don't worry, we're still offering a research focused article! We're also introducing a new section, "Ask Pat" featuring questions from teachers that will be answered by Pre-K consultants. So, put on your walking shoes—we're Going Places!

"The world is a book, and those who do not travel read only one page" - St. Augustine

Getting Your Families Involved

This is a great time to encourage your families to get involved in the classroom. Parents and other family members go to many different places during the day! Use this topic as a way to extend "getting to know me" activities—moving from getting to know the child to getting to know the family. Here are some suggested activities:

- Invite families to a "places you will go" event in your classroom. Have brochures from travel agencies available and let children make a collage of places they

would like to visit someday. Take the opportunity to discuss how children might get to these



locations. One Pre-K classroom created an airline/airplane in their classroom and invited families to be the airline employees for a pretend trip to the beach.

- Have families bring a

picture of their child on their last vacation or outing. Make copies of the pictures and make a classroom book.

- Get a large map and plot the places where children have visited.

Be sure to share facts about your family as well. Knowing information such as where you are from, where you like to vacation, and where you 'go' during the day can help your families get to know you and feel more comfortable with you. Be creative, have fun and... get going!

Get Going - Transition Tips



Tip from the Top:
Have your children
make maps of
your classroom.
This will help them
get to know where
everything
belongs—and
make clean up
time much easier!

The theme of this month's newsletter is "Going Places," and to get from one place to another, we transition. Transitioning is an important part of Pre-K during the first part of the school year for a number of reasons. First of all, coming to Pre-K is a big step for children. They are transitioning from home or child care to a true school experience. Pre-K is a big change, and with that change comes anticipation, excitement, fear, and exhaustion. As teachers, it is our job to allow time for adjustment and offer support to four year olds who are just learning how to be students.

It is also important to remember that parents are transitioning to Pre-K as well. For the first time many expectations are imposed on them concerning their children. They are expected to present the required Pre-K

documents, have their children arrive on time, pick them up on time, make sure they attend regularly, not allow them to bring toys to school, and understand that the teacher will be assessing them, etc.

For many parents, this is the first time they will be separated from their children during the day. The teaching staff can help to make the transition smooth and gentle for parents by providing a warm, friendly classroom environment and by communicating often and positively with families.

We also transition throughout the Pre-K day as we move from one activity to another. Sometimes it is very difficult for four year olds who are engaged and are perfectly happy doing whatever it is they are doing, to be told that it is time to stop one activity in order to

move to the next. Giving five - and one-minute warnings allows children to finish as opposed to abruptly stopping activities. It is also helpful to maintain a consistent Pre-K schedule, so that students always know what is coming next.

As children transition between activities, it is extremely important to minimize wait time. People rarely do nothing. When adults are stuck in traffic, they listen to the radio. When they have to wait in line, they check their voice-mail or strike up a conversation with someone else. Children are the same. When they are waiting, they will find something to do, and it is often something that the teacher does not like. Transitions go much more smoothly when teachers plan for them. Below are a few transition ideas.

Transition Suggestions:

1. As children finish cleaning up from center time, have one teacher begin a favorite music and movement activity. This rewards the students who stayed on task and finished with something fun to do, and it encourages the other students to finish so they can participate.
2. When putting coats on to go outside, let one teacher

take out the first ten children who are finished while the second teacher finishes up with the remaining students.

3. Instead of having all the students line up to wash hands, play a game, like Simon Says, while having students go to the sink two at a time.

4. Allow students to move onto the next activity as they finish meals or snacks instead of sitting and waiting for the entire class to finish.

5. Use finger plays, rhymes, and chants during wait times to keep hands and mouths busy.

Literacy Throughout The Classroom

Using environmental print is an easy and inexpensive way to incorporate the Going Places topic throughout your classroom. Environmental print consists of signs and symbols that children see every day in their homes and community. These signs and symbols are a part of their first reading experience. Environmental print is a powerful, meaningful and inexpensive tool for literacy. Examples of the print that surrounds us every day are labels on cereal boxes, snacks and drinks, labels on household items, coupons or advertisements for items in a newspaper or magazine, restaurants, stores, and other community places. Children first recognize the environmental print from the colors, shapes and pictures they see frequently. Using environmental print is a meaningful way to help develop a stronger foundation for literacy success. Parents can help by collecting labels, coupons etc. and sending them in on a weekly basis. You can create matching games, books, and environmental print walls.

You can also use environmental print to create protected space in your classroom. The materials you'll need are minimal:

- 12 cereal boxes of the same size
- clear packing tape
- a carpet square or pillow

Use the packing tape and cereal boxes to create a box shape with 3 sides. Arrange the boxes 2 high

and 2 wide for each wall of the box. Place a colorful carpet square or pillow in the bottom of the creation. Children can sit inside the 3-sided protected space with no bottom or top when they choose to play alone. Each side of the box will have 4 cereal boxes for children to view.

You can use your going places topic to extend and add variety to your phonological awareness ac-



tivities as well. Look for finger plays and rhymes about travel and transportation. The first and most basic step in developing phonological awareness skills is to develop children's listening skills. Using environmental sounds on a tape recording helps children develop critical listening skills to identify specific sounds.

Children's names are meaningful and therefore are a powerful, motivating tool to use in the Pre K classroom. Children are eager to identify their names and the sounds and letters in their names. As you talk about places your children have been or going be sure

to add the names of the people and places they visit. These names are also important to children and are excellent ways to introduce new vocabulary. Some ideas for incorporating children's names include:

- Place children's pictures with their first name in the writing area.
- Use children's names on the helper chart.
- Let children move a name card from one place to another to show they are present each day. Use the cards to identify children that may be absent.
- Create a matching game with names and pictures of children.
- Writing: Provide children with a variety of items to promote the fine motor skills necessary for writing.

As children become familiar with names and words they will want to experiment with forming letter and writing. Include a wide variety of materials to encourage exploration. Some suggested materials:

- playdough and clay - be sure to include tools to use with playdough and clay
- lacing cards and beads of varying sizes with strings
- paper to tear
- markers and dry erase boards
- finger paint
- bottles of various sizes with screw on caps

Be sure to provide fat crayons, pencils, and markers for children that may have difficulty grasping smaller writing tools.

Going Places - The Science of It All

Travel and science may not seem to be closely related. However a closer look may reveal some new and interesting activities. Following are three science activities that may be new to your classroom. To help out with all of your classroom planning, we've even included the content standards that can be addressed with the activities, as well as assessment strategies.



Create Discovery Bottles

Bottles representing various places/environments around the globe encourages the development of observational skills, scientific inquiry, and thinking skills. Label each bottle with a description of the environment it contains. Seal the bottles with hot glue or duct tape.

- **Desert Bottle:** Add small plastic desert plants such as cacti or tumbleweed; and animals such as lizards, snakes or camels. Fill a with small amount of sand.
- **Outer Space Bottle:** Fill with glow-in-the-dark stars, glitter, and other items representing space. Fill with hair gel or corn syrup (Karo). Use a flashlight to the make stars glow. Place the bottle in a box or under a sheet to see the glowing effect.

- **Beach Bottle:** Fill with beach sand, shells, plastic ocean animals, and palm trees.
- **Jungle Bottle:** Fill with plastic animals representing jungle life such as lions, giraffes, zebras, tigers, gorillas, elephants, and leopards. Fill bottle with shampoo or hair gel to create density.
- **Farm Bottle:** Fill with plastic farm animals such as cows, sheep, horses, ducks, turkeys, pigs, cats, and dogs. Add rice as a filler.
- **Swamp/Wetland Bottle:** Alligators, frogs, toads, dragonflies, turtles, fish, and lily pads, will create an exciting bottle. Fill partially with uncooked grits.
- **Forest Bottle:** Add raccoons, bears, deer, snakes, and squirrels. Fill with water and several drops of detergent.

Place extra (leftover) plant/animal pieces in a tub. Encourage children to sort and classify using the bottles as sources of inspiration. (Content Standard: SD2a. Assessment: Small Group Observation)

Add additional resources such as books, magazines, and puzzles to expand on the discovery bottle concepts.

Use stickers or pictures to create picture/word cards re-

flecting the various plants/animals in the bottles to encourage writing and reading.

Create a Science Exploration Kit for Kids on the Go!

To encourage use of science materials, fill a backpack with magnets, compass, microscope, binoculars, magnified glass, ruler, measuring tape, flashlight, prism, small paper bags, crayons, pencils, and tablet. Children can use the backpack to explore indoors or outdoors. (Content Standard: SD1d. Assessment: Create a matrix for the month)

Grab a Suitcase and Go!

Pack a small travel case or overnight bag with materials for exploring light and refraction. Old CD discs, prisms, mirrors, sparkly objects, colored water in plastic bottles, sun catchers, flashlights, color paddles, kaleidoscopes, and sunglasses make discovering light concepts interactive and engaging. (Content Standard: SD1d. Assessment: Create a matrix for the month)

How We Move Encourage children to help create a collection of vehicles that take us places. Create ramps using the ramps from the block area, pieces of heavy cardboard, and cookie sheets. Experiment with this simple machine by using various size vehicles and ramps. Place materials in science area for independent use. Listen for the predictions! (Content Standard: SD3c. Assessment: Small Group Observation)



Representing various places/environments around the globe encourages development of observational skills, scientific inquiry, and thinking skills.

Changing Your Classroom: Going Places

Making changes to your learning environment is an easy way to get your children involved in your topic of study—and it's required on the PQA! Below, listed by learning area, are some suggestions for changing your classroom for "Going Places."

Reading Area:

Carl's Summer Vacation

by Alexandra Day

Strega Nona Takes a Vacation

by Tomi dePaola

Transportation

by Margaret C. Hall

We All Go Traveling By

by Sheena Roberts

What is Your Language?

by Debra Leventhal

Away from Home

by Anita Lobel

Somewhere in the World Right

Now

by Stacey Schuett

Writing Area:

Add book making materials (variety of paper and writing implements, photographs of children in the class, magazines, scissors, glue, hole punches, yarn, ribbon, etc.) for children to make "Where I'm Going" books. Be sure to include old maps, picture of places in your community and pictures of common vacation spots. Place the books in the reading area.

Add vocabulary words such as: vacation, travel, transportation, train, bus, car, vehicle, airplane, airport, construction, tickets, suitcase, pack, and map.

Include word strips with children's names, their families names and pictures.

Math/Manipulatives:

Make memory cards using pictures of places the children might go for a vacation. Re-

member you will need two identical pictures of each place so children can play a memory game.

Add a container of die-cut children or people in various colors for sorting, counting, and patterning.

Dramatic Play Area:

Add props for making a travel agency (travel brochures, appointment books, name tags for travel agency employees, travel guides, and airline tickets.) Children can plan trips and pretend to pack and get ready to travel.

Block Area:

Create block props by securing pictures of the travel destinations on paper towel rolls.

Add extra vehicles to increase the variety of types of transportation toys (boats, trucks, trains, planes, and cars)

A simple form to document these changes can be found on the website in the Teachers Section: under PQA Resources' -Planning - Changes to Learning Areas Form.

Classroom Kitchen: Trail Mix

As you talk about all the places you are going you can have your students help you make one of these easy trail mixes for your 'trips'. You could make these during small group times. Some children could focus on measuring, some on sorting types of foods, and other children could work on dividing the trail mix into equal parts.

Method:

Combine all ingredients in a zip-top bag and shake well to mix.

Fruity Nut Mix

1/2 cup sunflower seeds
1/2 cup raisins
1 cup dried banana chips
1/2 cup shredded coconut
1 cup unsalted peanuts
1 cup dried fruit bits

Kitchen Sink Trail Mix

1/4 cup of any eight of the following items:
Unsalted nuts, peanuts, cashews, or almonds
Sunflower seeds
Dried cranberries
Dried apricots
Raisins
Mini pretzels
Multi-grain Cheerios
Whole wheat Chex cereal





Ask Pat

DEAR PAT: We all know the importance of children learning to write. How can I help support and encourage this critical area in my Pre-K classroom? --MISS PRE-K TEACHER

DEAR MISS PRE-K TEACHER: Children learn to write long before they learn to read. Toddlers who can barely hold a crayon or pencil will begin to make marks on paper. Children are naturally inquisitive about writing and writing materials. This natural draw enables us to encourage a child's love of writing. One of our many goals as teachers is to help children understand that writing has a value, it is meaningful, and has a function. This understanding and the love of writing is more important than ensuring children form letters correctly.

One of the first words children frequently recognize

and attempt to write is their name. There is nothing more special to a child than their name. Knowing this it is especially important that children find their names printed throughout the environment. To encourage children to write their names some suggestions are to:

- spell children's names out loud when writing on their work
- encourage children to write their names on their work
- provide a sign-in sheet the room to have children "sign in" each morning
- use children's names to label the area where the children's belonging are kept
- ensure name cards are available in your writing area for children to copy
- incorporate the children's names into songs,

finger plays, and chants;

- have a waiting list "sign-in" for popular areas or toys in the classroom such as the computer
- have a "child of the day" and concentrate on their name during large group; talk about the letters in their name, who else has those letters, etc.

Writing, like all areas of development, progresses through stages and each child will progress at their own rate. Children start out scribbling then move to random letter formation, and on to copying words. Our goal is to provide the children with the appropriate materials, experiences, and support to help them move on to the next level.



Content Standard Connections

Wondering how to connect some of the Content Standards to the Going Places topic? We've highlighted a few here:

LDI b, LD I d, LD I f:

Read Oh! The Places You'll Go by Dr. Seuss. Take a picture walk through the story and allow the children to predict what will happen next.

SS3 a

Make a class chart comparing and contrasting the children's school to their home.

One of our many goals as teachers is to help children understand that writing has a value, it is meaningful, and has a function.

The Content Standards contain additional activities for family involvement. You can access and download the Content Standards online: www.decal.state.ga.us

Research in Action - Literacy in Pre-K

Research shows that one of the best predictors of how well a child will function in school is how well the child will progress in reading and writing. Now, this is no shocker to the many educators around the world but what is of concern are the methods used to teach reading and writing to young children.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) stated in *Young Children*, July, 1998 that the ability to recognize the early beginnings of literacy acquisition too often has resulted in use of inappropriate teaching practices suited to older children or adults, but ineffective with children in preschool, kindergarten, and the early grades. NAEYC goes on to say such activities include extensive whole-group instruction and intensive drill and practice on isolated skills for groups of individuals. These practices, not particularly effective for primary-grade children, are even less suitable and effective with preschool and kindergarten children. It is very important that preschool-age children receive experiences that are age and developmentally appropriate. Exercises that are meaningful and use prior knowl-

edge will be most beneficial to the children but such activities are crucial for children with a limited exposure to literacy in the home. Research has shown that learning to read and write is not an all-or-nothing but rather a gradual process.

Children begin this journey by listening to rhymes and playing games such as pat-a-cake. In this, what seem to be simplified activities, the children are actually beginning to use a variety of symbols. This stage transitions into the children beginning to understand that certain marks have a meaning.

NAEYC explains that as the children develop an understanding of the alphabetic principle, they begin to process letters, translate them into sounds, and connect this information with a known meaning. One of the most important factors for supporting the children's development of the alphabetic principal is reading but just as important is the principal of writing. Preschool-aged children need extensive exposure to print. The reading of big books, the use of labels, signs and any other kind of print is imperative to this age. When the classroom is rich with print we are

likely to see the children will carry this new-found knowledge into their play to enhance the realism. These beginning stages of writing will begin with symbols, progress into letters and then into inventive spelling. We, as educators, are aware that once children have an understanding that letters represent certain sounds, they will begin using inventive spelling. Studies have shown that inventive spelling may contribute to beginning reading. The process of inventive spelling allows the children the experience of working with letter-sound relations.

Teachers need to be aware that classrooms offering regular opportunities for the children to express themselves on paper, without feeling too constrained for correct spelling and proper handwriting, will guide the children into understanding that writing has a real purpose.

National Association for the Education of Young Children. In Young Children, July 1998, 53 (4): 30-46.



“When the classroom is rich with print we are likely to see the children will carry this new found knowledge into their play to enhance the realism. “

Assessment Corner

Do you have your portfolios set up? Have you started collecting data? Hopefully, you answered yes to both of these questions. A lot of the documentation you are gathering will be a baseline of where your children are developmentally. This data will assist you in your daily lesson plans.

Returning teachers, once you have been in school for four weeks you will need to use your developmental checklist to see what documentation you have gathered on your students. Make sure you make these marks in pencil so you can change them as you gather more documentation. Develop plans on how you are going to assess your children during various parts of the day. Are you going to take the camera outside and take pictures of them on the tricycles? Or maybe you will make a matrix for large group time while they follow directions to a particular song. New teachers, continue to gather documentation and make sure you are scheduled for New Teacher Institute training.

Look for updated matrices and other useful tools on our website at www.dec.state.ga.us

Going Places: Fingerplays and Rhymes

I'm A Little Airplane

(Tune: "I'm a Little Teapot")

I'm a little airplane,

(children raise arms at sides to shoulder height.)

Now watch me fly!

(They spin one of their arms in front of them as if it were a propeller)

Here are my instruments

From down low to up high.

(With their other arm, they reach from the ground to above their heads.)

First I get revved up.

(Children make engine noises while still spinning their arms.)

Then I can fly,

(Children raise arms to shoulder height.)

Lifting off the runway

(They start walking forward.)

Up into the sky!

(They go up on their tiptoes and continue to move forward. Let them circle awhile before returning to their original positions.)

(clap hands)

Then I rest them in my lap

Now they're quiet as can be.

(sit down and rest hands in lap)

C-A-R

(Tune: B-I-N-G-O)

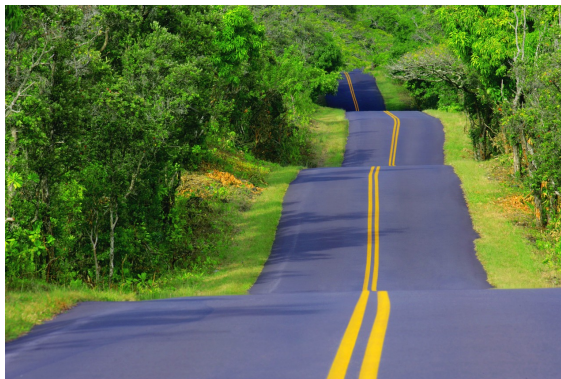
Look at my bright shiny car,

I'm driving it today-o!

C-A-R (beep! beep!)

C-A-R (beep! beep!)

I'm driving it today-O



A Peanut Sat on a Railroad Track

(Tune: Polly Wolly Doodle)

A peanut sat on a railroad track,

His heart was all a-flutter,

Round the bend came number ten,

Toot! Toot! Peanut butter! SQUISH!!!

Wagon

Bumping up and down in my little red wagon

Bumping up and down in my little red wagon

Bumping up and down in my little red wagon

Let's ride off together!

Repeat using :

My little brown donkey

My little black buggy



10 Park Place South, Suite 200

Atlanta, GA 30303

404-656-5957

www.decal.state.ga.us